



# Indiana State Department of Health

## Epidemiology Resource Center

### Quick Facts

#### About...Listeriosis

##### What is listeriosis?

Listeriosis (list-ear-ee-OH-sis) is a spreadable disease caused by *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria. These bacteria are found in soil, untreated water, and the intestines of some animals. These animals are not sick but can pass the bacteria into the soil through feces.

##### What are the symptoms of listeriosis?

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal cramps
- Diarrhea

Symptoms usually begin 21 days (range of 3-70 days) after exposure. Symptoms can last several days or several weeks. Healthy people may not have any symptoms, while others may become a little sick.

##### How is listeriosis spread?

Most often, people get listeriosis by eating food that has *Listeria* bacteria. *Listeria* is killed by pasteurization and cooking. However, in some ready-to-eat foods, e.g., luncheon meats, bacteria may get on it after cooking, but before packaging. Raw produce may become contaminated by contact with soil or manure. Unlike other bacteria found in food, *Listeria* can grow in food even while refrigerated. The only way listeriosis can be spread person to person is from mother to baby during pregnancy. It cannot be spread by other person-to-person contact.

##### Who is at risk for getting listeriosis?

Anyone can become ill, but young children, older adults, pregnant women, and immune suppressed individuals (such as patients on cancer drugs and with organ transplants) are most likely to get sick. Pregnant women are more likely than others to get listeriosis. Newborn babies suffer the most serious effects of illness in pregnancy.

### **How do I know if I have listeriosis?**

People at higher risk for listeriosis who have unexplained symptoms should see a doctor. However, since many people have no symptoms, it is often not known if a pregnant woman and her fetus are at risk. The health care provider may take several samples to test for *Listeria* if they think the illness might be there.

### **How is listeriosis treated?**

Antibiotics should be given from your health care provider to treat listeriosis. If illness happens when a woman is pregnant, quick treatment can often stop disease in the fetus.

### **How is listeriosis prevented?**

- Properly wash hands with soap and water after using the restroom, after helping someone with diarrhea and/or vomiting, after touching animals and reptiles, after swimming, before, during, and after food preparation, and after exposure to raw meats.
- Separate raw and cooked foods.
- Keep food at safe temperatures.
- Do not eat undercooked meat, poultry, or eggs.
- Do not eat foods past the expiration date.
- Do not eat unpasteurized dairy products.
- Wash all produce before eating raw or cooking.
- Use treated water for washing, cooking, and drinking.
- Keep kitchen and environment clean and free from germs.
- The temperature of your refrigerator should be 40°F or lower and the freezer 0°F or lower. (Remember: *Listeria monocytogenes* can grow in foods in the refrigerator.)

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/> and Listeria and Food <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/specific-foods/listeria-and-food.html>.

Food and Drug Administration, Food Facts for Consumers:  
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm077286.htm>

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